



The Carltions Visit the Gibbard Plant

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*The EDITH and LORNE PIERCE
COLLECTION of CANADIANA*



Queen's University at Kingston

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1766

Note by Mr. Moffat:

Quite a number of people each year pay a friendly visit to the Gibbard Plant. One day I accompanied a Mr. and Mrs. Carlton on a tour through the factory. In the course of our conversation, just before saying good bye, I discovered that Mrs. Carlton was an author. It immediately struck me that she might be persuaded to write a little story giving her impressions of her tour through our plant. She did, and most entertainingly, I think. Her story is unaltered except for a few technical corrections. While it does not show our process of making Gibbard Solid Walnut Furniture step by step, it tells about the things that she found most interesting.

J. H. MOFFAT,
President,

Gibbard Furniture Shops, Limited,
Napanee, Ontario.

Napanee---The Home of Solid Walnut

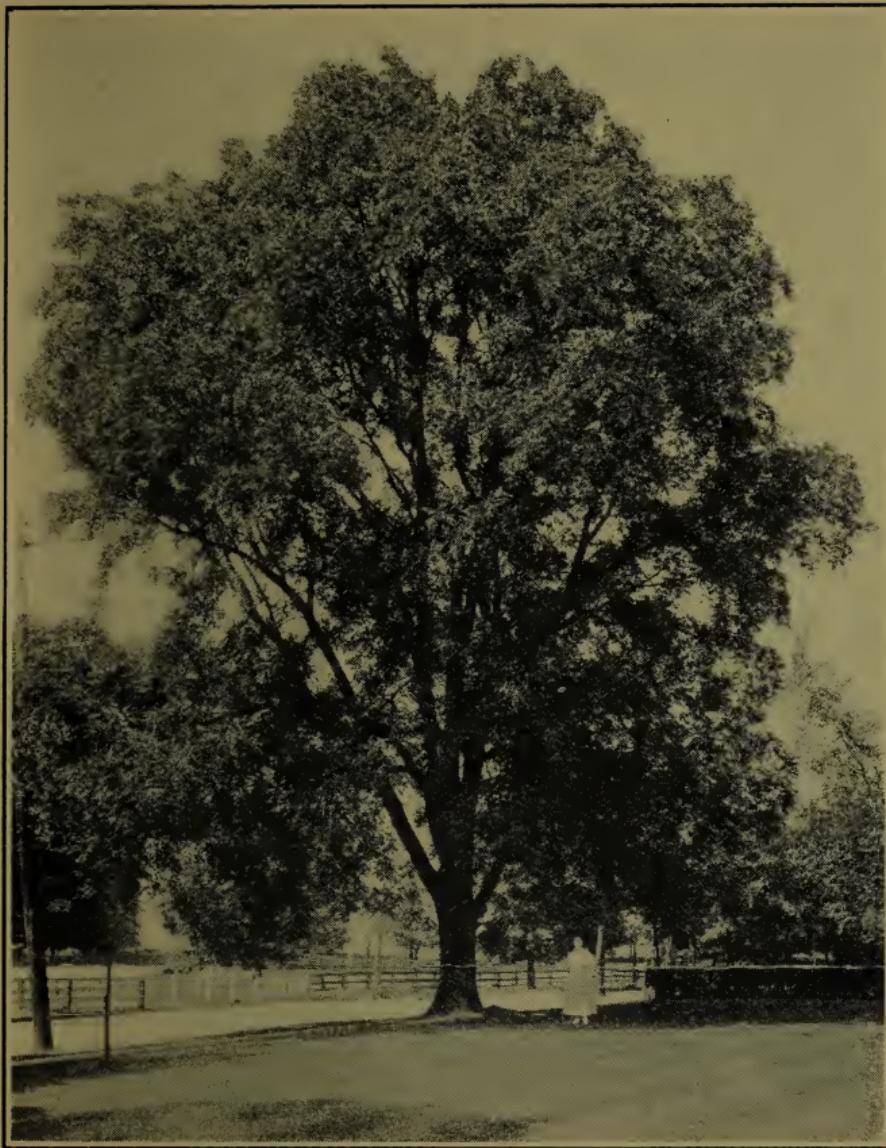
OUR visit to Gibbard Furniture Shops was the result of an impulse. My husband and I were on our way back from a motor trip to Ottawa. We came down a big hill, then over a bridge, and Tom said, "Here's Napanee".

Hardly had he said "Napanee" than I caught sight of a sign on a big building with the words "The Home of Gibbard Solid Walnut".

"Stop, quick!" I exclaimed.

Tom jammed on the brakes. Then nervously asked, "What's wrong? Did I hit a dog or anything?"

"Look! There's where they make Gibbard Solid Walnut Furniture that's advertised in the papers", said I. "Let's go in and see what they are showing. We might see the very suite for our guest room. You promised me we'd furnish it properly this year". And I started to get out of the car before Tom could protest.



THE GENUINE WALNUT TREE—
The source of Gibbard Solid Walnut Furniture

Tom just had to follow

“Hold on, not so fast”, I heard Tom say as my feet touched the ground. Then some grumbling as he climbed out, too. “These people don’t want motorists butting in and annoying them”.

“Well, the sign says, ‘Visit our Show-rooms,’ ” I meekly replied, which floored Tom, but didn’t stop him from remarking, “I thought we were on a holiday trip and not on a buying expedition”.

By that time I was opening the door to Gibbard’s, and Tom just had to follow.

A young lady greeted us, and she was just saying “I’ll have some one take you through the showrooms”, when Mr. Moffat (since this story was written Mr. Moffat has been elected President of the Company), Chief Designer and Secretary Treasurer of the Company, happened to come along, and, introducing himself, remarked, “Perhaps you would like to go through the plant and see how Gibbard Solid Walnut Furniture is made?”



After the tree is cut down the Walnut logs are trucked to the sawmills to be sawn into Walnut lumber



Some extra good logs of Walnut

“We would be delighted”

I had visions of noise, dust and sawdust in my hair and was about to gracefully decline when Tom brightened up and remarked, “We would be delighted”.

Tom likes seeing things made and fussing around machinery. Besides I think he thought that the farther I was away from the showrooms the safer it was for his pocketbook.

Mr. Moffat sent for some one to show us through, but the man was busy showing a visiting dealer around, so Mr. Moffat volunteered to go with us himself.

“We will start at the beginning”, said Mr. Moffat, and guided us outside to the lumber yard. “That’s all genuine Walnut”, said he, pointing to rows of neatly stacked planks piled about fifteen feet high.

“All of that Walnut?” said Tom.

Largest Importers of Walnut

"Yes", nodded Mr. Moffat, "We are the largest importers of walnut in Canada."

"You don't use Canadian walnut?" inquired Tom.

"We do when we can get it, but nearly all the walnut has been cut out of this country. In fact, there are no walnut forests left in Canada or the United States".

"Where do you get your walnut, then?" I asked.



One corner of the Gibbard yards showing how the Walnut lumber is piled



*Walnut lumber in a Gibbard kiln ready for steam drying
as soon as the door is closed*

Highland grown Walnut superior

“We get it from the States. Walnut is bought much the same as a drover buys cattle. It is found mostly in clumps of a few trees along the fence lines. Walnut buyers roam the country looking for walnut trees. They make offers to the owners of the trees. If the owners are not ready to sell they make notes of the owners’ names and call back on their next trip”.

“Does walnut vary much in quality?” asked my practical husband.

“Quite a lot”, replied Mr. Moffat. “We get ours from trees grown on the Cumberland Hills and on the Highlands of tributaries to the Mississippi. Considerable walnut grows in the lowlands of the Mississippi, but it is not of the same quality as the hill grown walnut. It is more yellow in color, coarser, softer and more sappy. We don’t want that kind of walnut”.

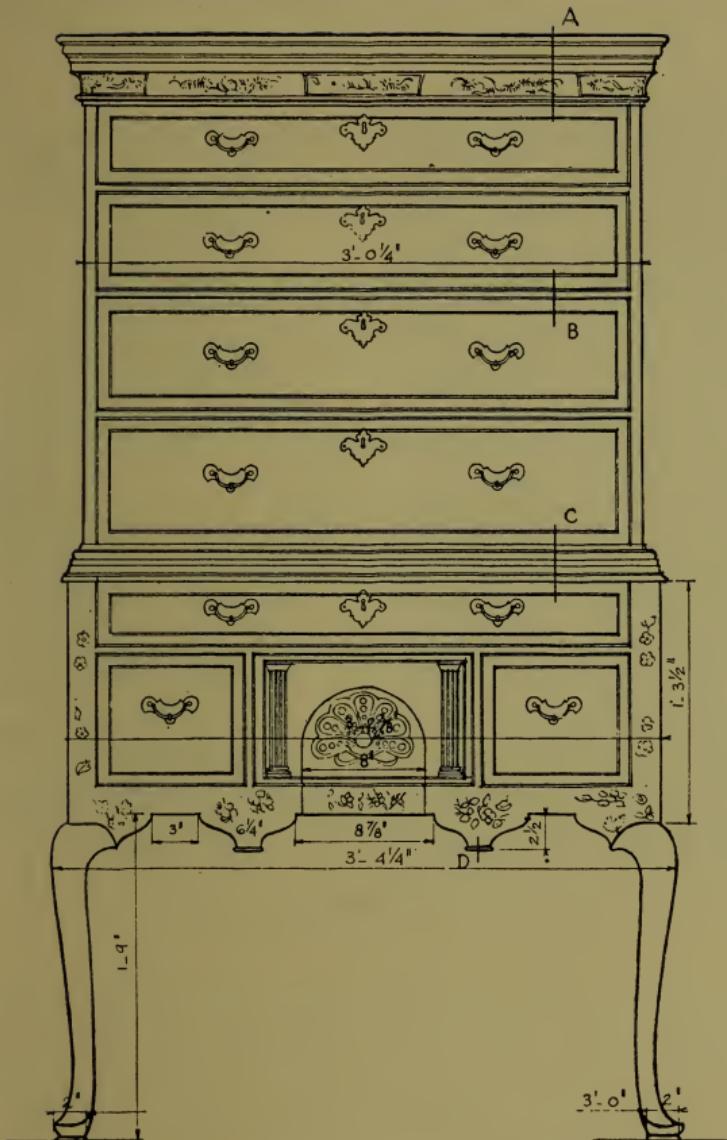
Moisture removed from the Lumber

“After we season the lumber in these piles outdoors”, he continued, “we place it in these batteries of kilns”.

We were now walking past some huge stalls (kilns) with immense doors, each stall big enough to hold a car or so of lumber.

“Before going into these kilns the lumber contains from 20% to as high as 60% moisture. We steam it and dry it with moist air for many days until it contains not more than 5% moisture. If we didn’t, it would shrink, warp, crack, perhaps months afterwards in the home”.

“I never dreamt”, said I, “that you took all that trouble with your lumber. I thought the walnut would be all ready to use as soon as you unloaded it from the cars. It certainly gives me confidence when I see how particular you are to have your walnut right before you start to make it into furniture”.



A designer's drawing of a high boy

Furniture worthy of genuine Walnut

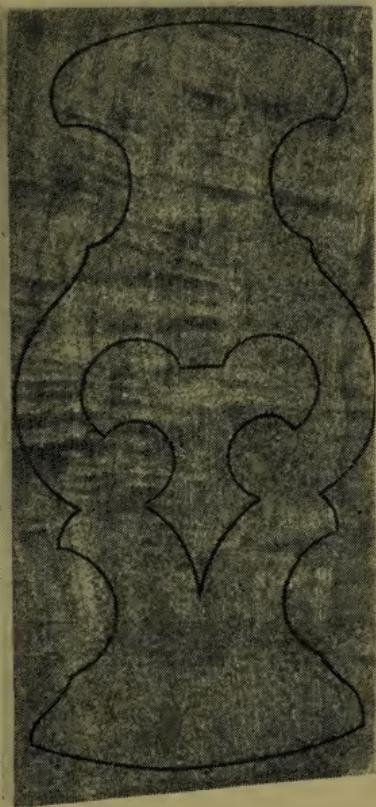
“Perhaps we had better drop into the designing room next”, remarked Mr. Moffat. He then showed us how he, himself, and his assistants work out the designs for Gibbard Furniture, much too technical for me to describe but very interesting.

Mr. Moffat remarked, “A good furniture designer must be able to gauge the trend of furniture design months ahead in order to keep his line of furniture always right up to date. There are style trends in furniture the same as in women’s clothes, although not so pronounced. Our aim is to design furniture that is artistic and beautiful, right up to date, yet never freakish or faddish. We try to create designs worthy of genuine Solid Walnut and give you furniture that will be a joy to live with for years to come”.

He showed us how his designs on paper were made into wooden patterns. Then how they took these patterns and traced the designs in pencil on the Solid Walnut. From



A



B

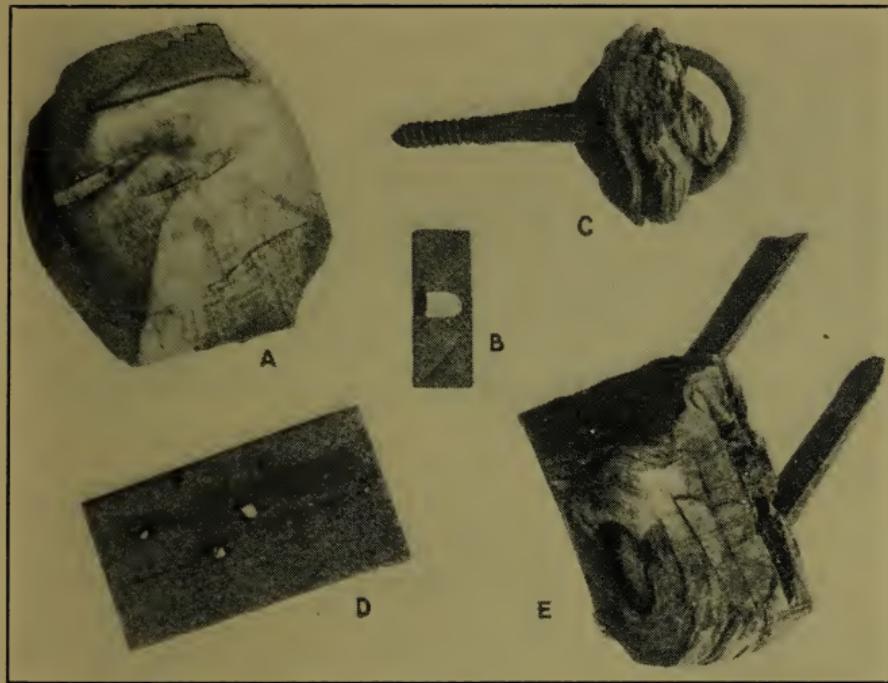
"A" is a pattern of a chair back. This pattern is placed upon "B," which is a solid piece of Walnut, and the pattern traced on it, after which the chair back is sawn out of this piece. Other parts of Gibbard Solid Walnut are produced in a somewhat similar manner.

In the midst of whirring machines

there we saw how the operators of the band saws, jigsaws and turning lathes followed these pencil lines in cutting, turning and shaping the wood into chair backs, bed posts, stretchers, drawer fronts, dresser tops and various other parts of furniture.

We were now right in the factory in the midst of whirring machines. In explaining the different operations, Mr. Moffat had to speak louder to make himself heard above the sound of high-speed saws cutting through walnut. The noise to me was rather inspiring. It suggested success. And I have always liked the woodsy aroma of fresh sawn wood.

“The unexpected sometimes happens when sawing up the walnut into different lengths”, remarked Mr. Moffat. A saw will suddenly shriek in agony, perhaps break or lose some teeth, as it strikes an obstruction buried in the wood. Sometimes it is a nail or spike



FROM THE GIBBARD BOX OF CURIOS

A—Part of an old saw that may be a century old.

B—A bullet that a saw in the factory struck.

C—An old-fashioned gate hinge that had been completely buried in the tree.

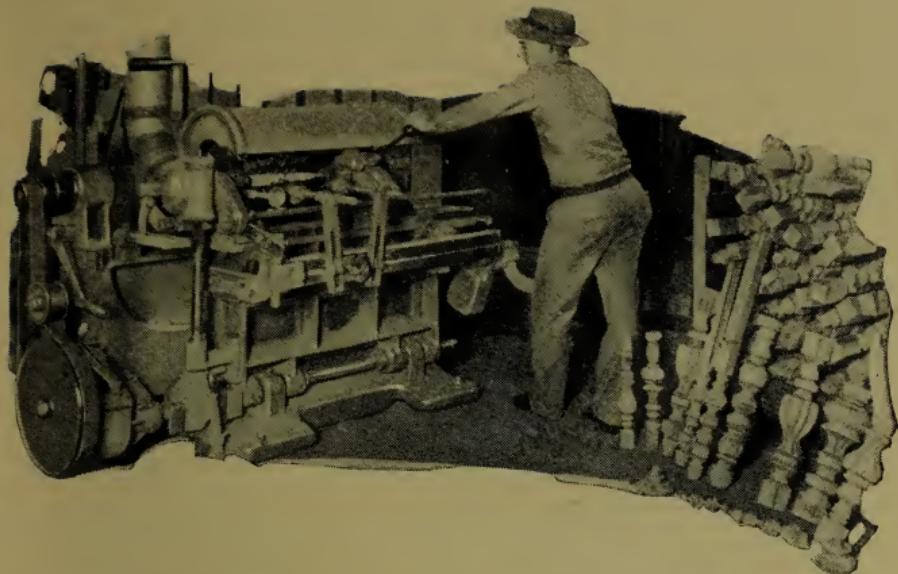
D—More bullets.

E—A gate staple that the tree grew over and hid from sight.

A Box of Interesting Curios

that was driven in the tree fifty years ago and hidden as the tree grew bigger and covered it. Walnut has the faculty of healing itself of a wound, Nature proceeding to cover up the wound and the article causing it. "Look at these curios for example", and he pulled out a box containing a collection of queer-looking objects.

"Here", pointed Mr. Moffat, "is a piece of walnut containing a couple of bullets which as near as we can judge have been lodged there since the time of the American Civil War. This next piece has an old-fashioned gate hinge buried in it. The tree served as a gate post dear knows how many scores of years ago. And here is a piece of walnut with several teeth of a saw in it that was so deeply covered by new growth that it was probably broken off in the tree by the great, great grandfather of the man who ultimately sold or cut down the tree".



Turning out table legs and bed posts from solid pieces of walnut on the automatic turning lathe



BAND SAW (Exact size of teeth)



JIG SAW (Teeth shown exact size)

Above are sections of the saws used in various operations in making Gibbard Furniture

Each man a specialist

“Well, these curios have really nothing to do with the construction of Gibbard Furniture, and I guess we had better move along. There are a lot of other things I’m sure you’ll be interested in”, prophesied Mr. Moffat. And we resumed our journey.

I need not have worried about flying saw-dust in my hair or getting dust on my clothes, because everything was neat, clean and orderly. We could see that the whole plant worked on a carefully-planned system.

It was explained to us that practically every man was a specialist, each man working on one particular job.

That man in front of me who seemed to have his hand buried in a myriad of flying sparks was kept busy grinding knives on an emery wheel for use in the machines that turn the table legs and bed posts. “Knives must be kept sharp all the time to make a clean, neat job”, stated Mr. Moffat.



*Examples of Gibbard
Hand Carving on a
table leg and a sec-
tion of a table top.*

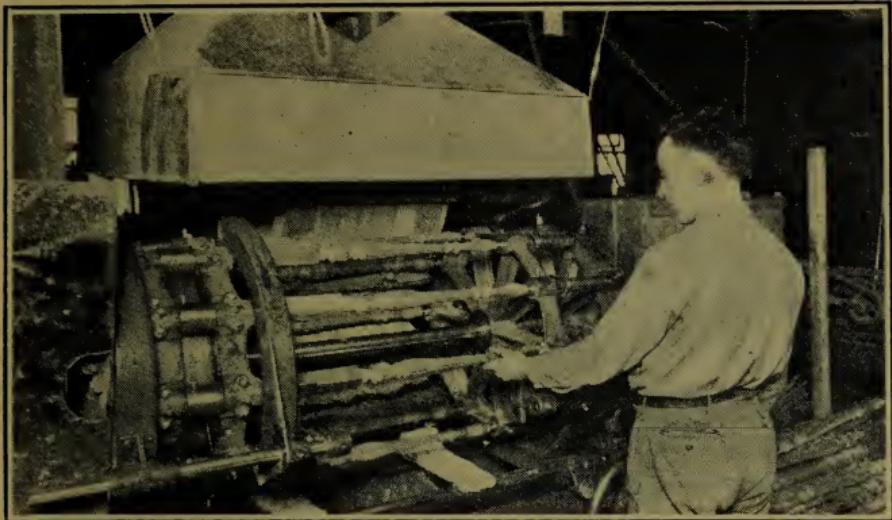
Operators as skilled as needlewomen

The man we were now approaching was kept operating the curious revolving lathe that cut and turned such things as bed posts and table legs from solid pieces of walnut.

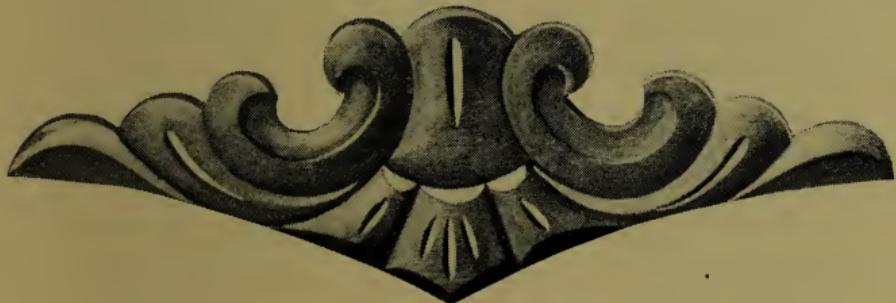
The machine that Tom was looking at so curiously was called a high speed shaper. A specially shaped knife, revolving at 10,000 to 12,000 revolutions per minute, put the moulded edge on such things as table tops and glass frames.

The man whose work I now found so interesting was a band saw operator cutting out chair backs, and the operator next to him was using a high speed fret saw to cut ornamental fretwork for china cabinets, and doing it as expertly as I use a needle to embroider.

The man with the curious looking tool in his hand was a hand carver cutting artistic patterns right in the Solid Walnut. "The carver," explained Mr. Moffat, "must be able to use his left hand as deftly as his right. We



Smoothing the surfaces of bed posts on the curious machine called a spindle sander, a most interesting operation. This ingenious machine will smooth the surfaces of even the most ornamental and intricate pieces.



Showing the careful, clean-cut detail of Gibbard workmanship

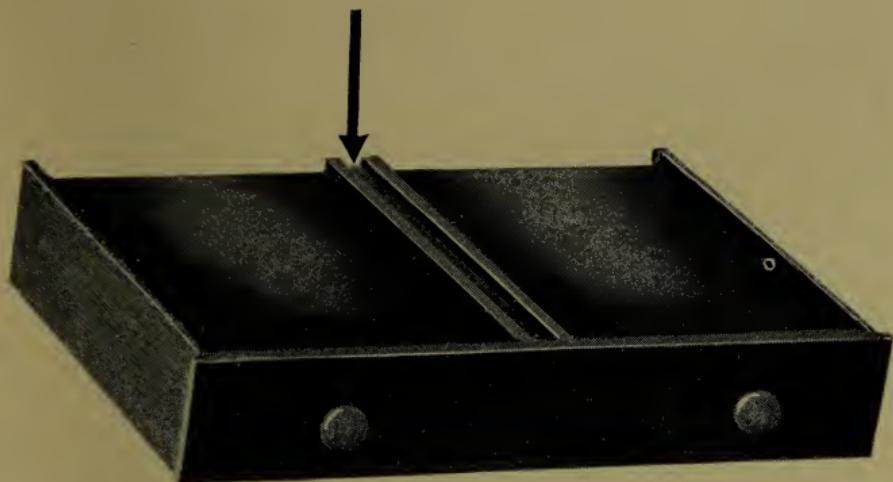
A lot of Walnut used

depend upon these hand carved decorations, rather than composition ornaments, to give our furniture character and distinction", he remarked.

"You waste a lot of walnut in making a suite of furniture", observed Tom. "You only used about a half of a walnut plank in cutting out that chair back".

"True", agreed Mr. Moffat. "And I'm sorry we have to waste any. With the shrinkage in kiln drying and the wastage in cutting out the various parts we buy two carloads of walnut for every one carload that actually appears in the furniture. In a suite of Gibbard Solid Walnut there is actually only half as many pounds of walnut as we bought to make it."

Just here I happened to ask how they managed to get the surfaces of the wood so smooth. Mr. Moffat took us over to a belt sander—which is a rapidly revolving belt of

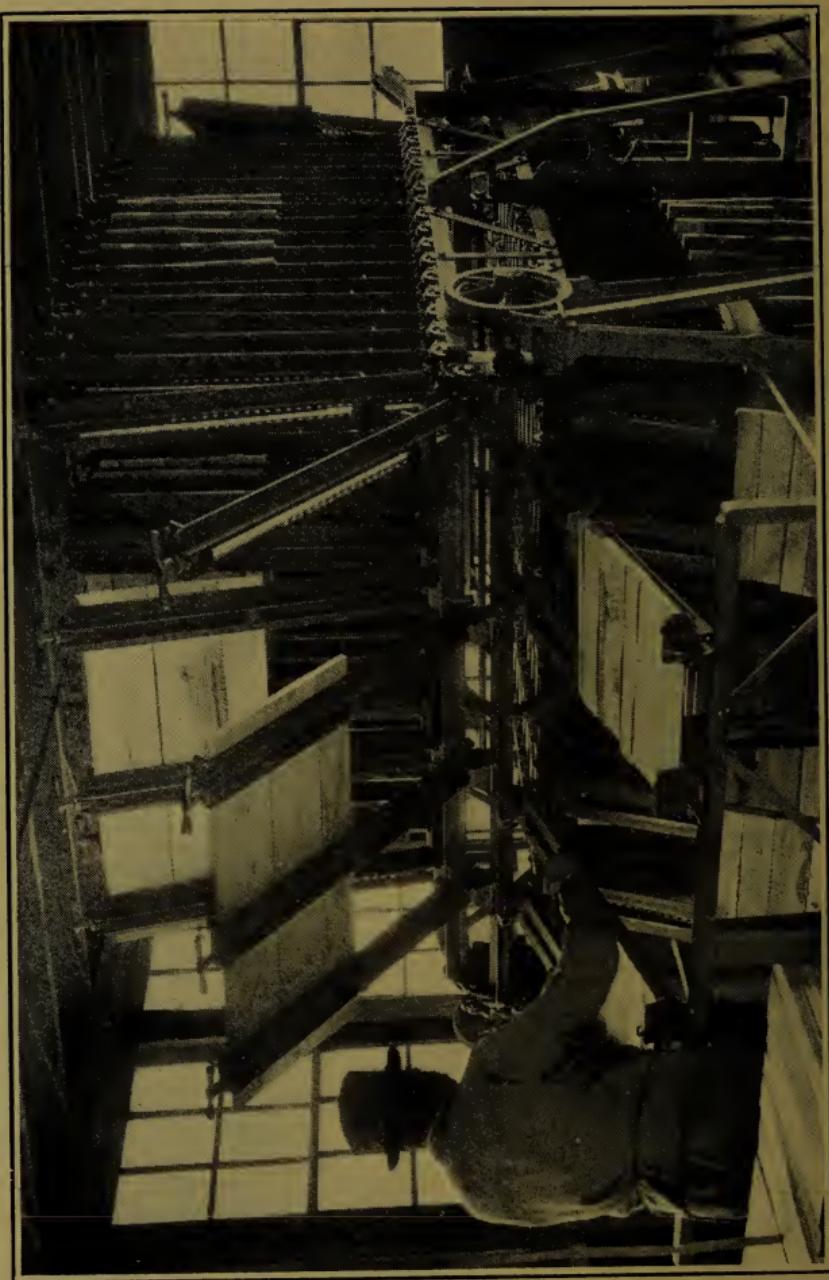


The drawers of Gibbard Furniture don't wobble or come out farther on one side than the other. They have drawer guides (see the arrow) that keep them straight and even when pulling them out or closing them.

Pictured to the right is an "Acorn" top of a Gibbard Bed Post. Note how clear and clean-cut this piece is. This gives you an idea how carefully Gibbard Solid Walnut Furniture is made right down to the smallest detail.



Glueing pieces of Gibbard Solid Walnut together under pressure on a novel machine called a Clamp Carrier



Glueing the parts together

sandpaper that smooths flat pieces of walnut. Right next to it was a curious machine, called a spindle sander, with strips of sand cloth that adjust themselves to the shape of table legs, bed posts or ornamental pieces and smooth the surfaces with uncanny ingenuity.

Pointing to a man putting strips of wood on the bottom of a drawer, Tom inquired, "What is that for?" "Those are the drawer guides", Mr. Moffat informed him. "They keep the drawer straight when you pull it out and prevent it wobbling or sticking at one side".

The next thing to catch my attention was a machine that I called a Ferris Wheel, but which really was a glueing machine. Different pieces of lumber were dipped along the edges in warm glue, then clamped together under pressure and given a ride around the wheel, the complete journey taking about an hour, at which time the glue was completely



*Showing the dust-proof divisions beneath the drawers of
Gibbard Furniture*

Dust-proof Divisions

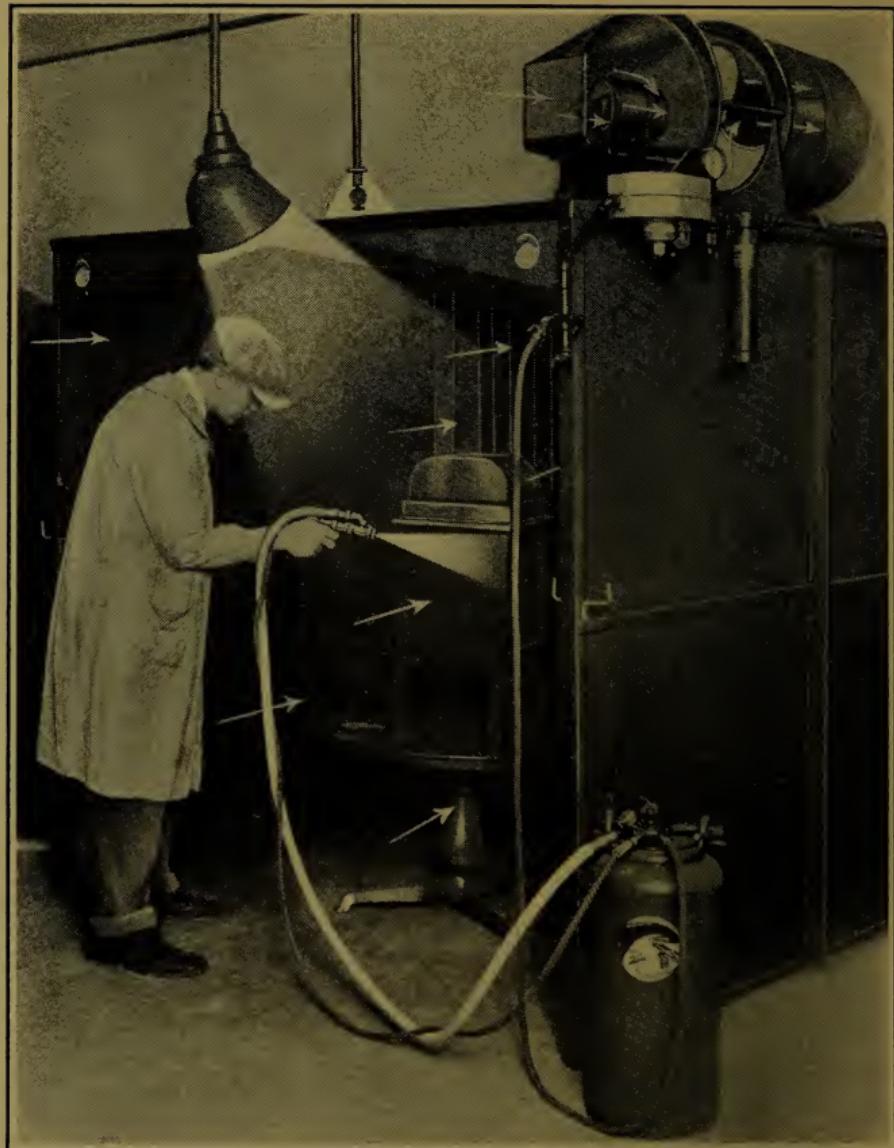
hardened. "The glue we use is a special kind that costs many times the price of ordinary glue", Mr. Moffat remarked, "and it makes a joint that stays tight almost forever".

"Aren't these different machines very expensive?" my husband inquired.

"Well, that little electric machine boring holes for screws cost \$1,200. That Turning Lathe over there cost \$3,000. The Glueing Machine you just admired cost \$3,000".

"Why, on this floor alone, you have thousands upon thousands invested in special machines!" exclaimed Tom.

Passing through the assembly room, where the different pieces were being put together to make chairs, tables, dressers and buffets, our attention was called to the dust-proof divisions beneath the drawers. "We know you ladies have lots of perishable or delicate things you want to keep away from the dust", remarked Mr. Moffat.



Spraying lacquer on a piece of furniture. Spraying gives a more even coat than brushwork

Shading is a delicate operation

“Now we are coming to something I am sure will interest you”, and with that we were ushered into the finishing room.

Here we saw men executing a delicate operation called shading. Any light streaks in the wood are expertly shaded to make the whole piece of furniture harmonize in tone. After which the furniture is sandpapered and shellaced and sandpapered again.

“Shellac produces a hard, thin film that retains the varnish or lacquer”, stated Mr. Moffat. “And that man right in front of you is high-lighting the furniture. He does it with a special gun-like machine, and has to have the eye and hand of an artist to get that two-toned or antique effect you see”.

“He certainly gets a beautiful effect”, I agreed, and then exclaimed, “Why, look! Are they really spraying those pieces of furniture?”

*The Metal
Trade Mark
that
Distinguishes
Genuine
Gibbard
Furniture*



Guarantee

This Tag is a Guarantee —

1. That all exterior parts of Gibbard furniture are Solid Walnut, including posts, stretchers, bed rails, china cabinet shelves and extra leaves of extension tables;
2. That all carvings are cut right in the Solid Wood, much of them by expert hand carvers, no "composition" ornamentations being used;
3. That dust-proof divisions are placed beneath all drawers;
4. That only the best and toughest finishing materials are used;
5. That only the highest standard of construction is practised.

*The
Guarantee
Tag
that
protects
the
purchaser
of
Gibbard
Solid
Walnut*

Gibbard
Furniture Shops Limited
Napanee Canada

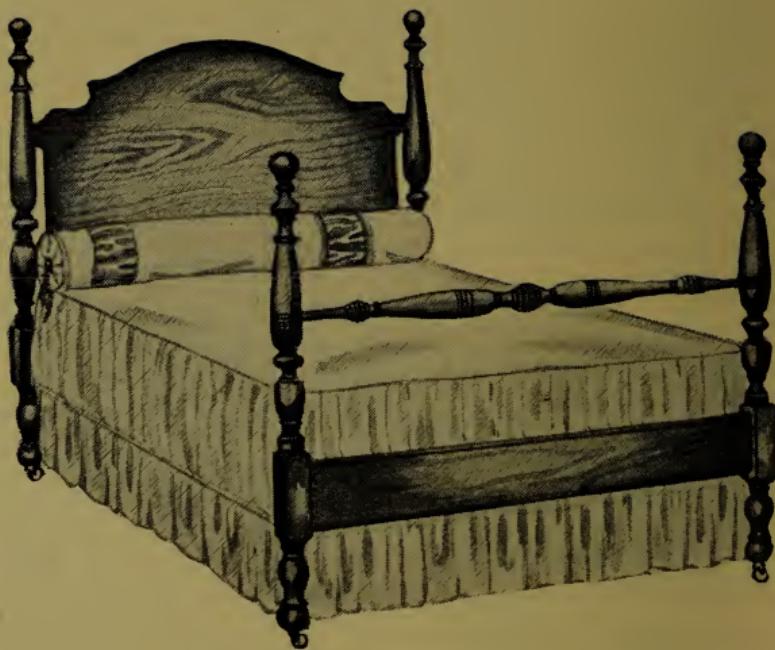
Only best lacquer used

“Oh”, said Mr. Moffat, “They are putting on a coat of lacquer. By spraying it on like a fine mist we can get a much smoother and more even coat than by hand. And we sandpaper the furniture between every coat of lacquer to make the finish still smoother”.

“We use only the best grade of lacquer”, he continued. “Cheap lacquers lack the body which is required to stand the sandpapering and rubbing down we give our finish. A lacquer such as we use gives us a body that we can rub down and produce a real durable finish and a much more beautiful one, too”.

“Here’s the final rubbing down”, and we were guided alongside men who were briskly rubbing table tops with felt pads soaked in a mixture of paraffine oil and finely powdered pumice.

“What a surprising thing to do”, I exclaimed. “Pumice powder and paraffine oil. I would think the pumice would scratch and scrape off the finish”.



Gibbard Four Posters

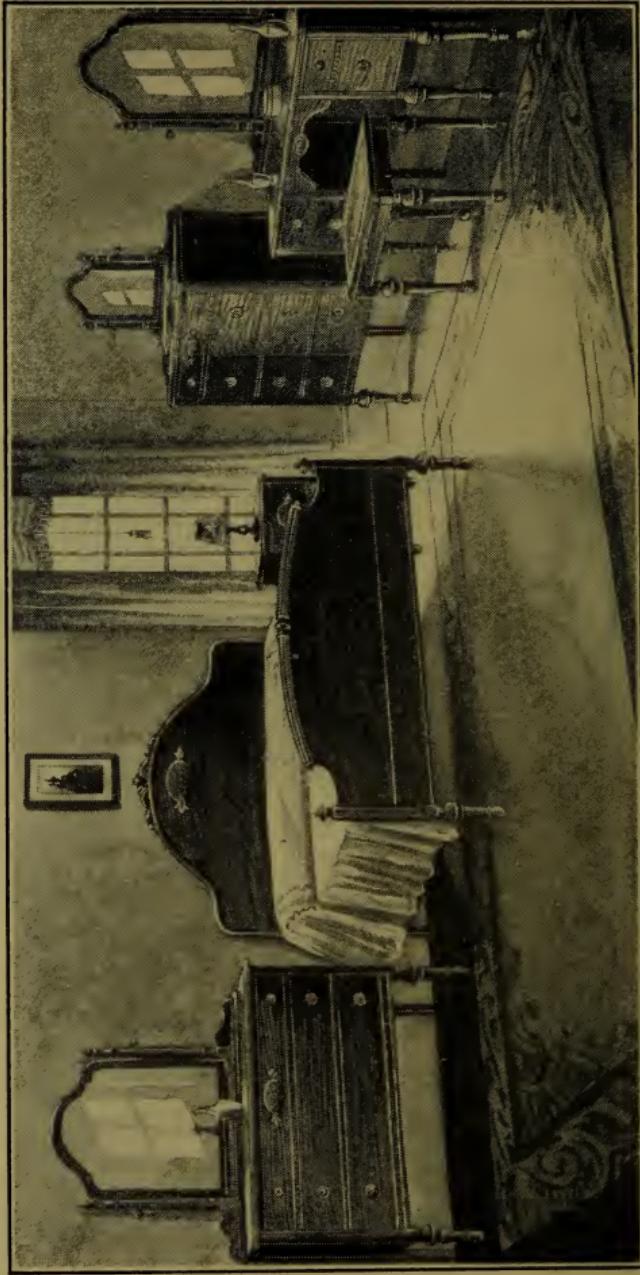
These make very fine gifts. There are several different styles built by Gibbard craftsmen. The beds are made in both the 4' 6" double and the popular 3' 3" twin bed size, and are obtainable in SOLID Mahogany as well as SOLID Walnut.

The last word in smoothness

“Not when combined with the oil and done by expert hands”, replied Mr. Moffat. “It simply removes any imperfections and produces the last word in smoothness. After this rubbing is completed, the oil and pumice are wiped off and then it is no trick at all to give the final polish with soft cloths”.

“Here’s where the furniture gets its final inspection before being crated ready to ship out. Our inspectors not only make sure that the furniture is O.K in every way, but that the Gibbard name-plate is on every piece”. And he showed us where they put their Gibbard Solid Walnut name-plate in the drawers of buffets, dressers and vanities and on the bottom of chairs and tables.

“Do you ever hear of cases where other furniture has been sold as yours?” enquired Tom.



Just one of the many different designs of bedroom suites obtainable in Gibbard Solid Walnut. This is one of the most moderately priced suites. All Gibbard Bedroom Suites are supplied with either double or twin beds.

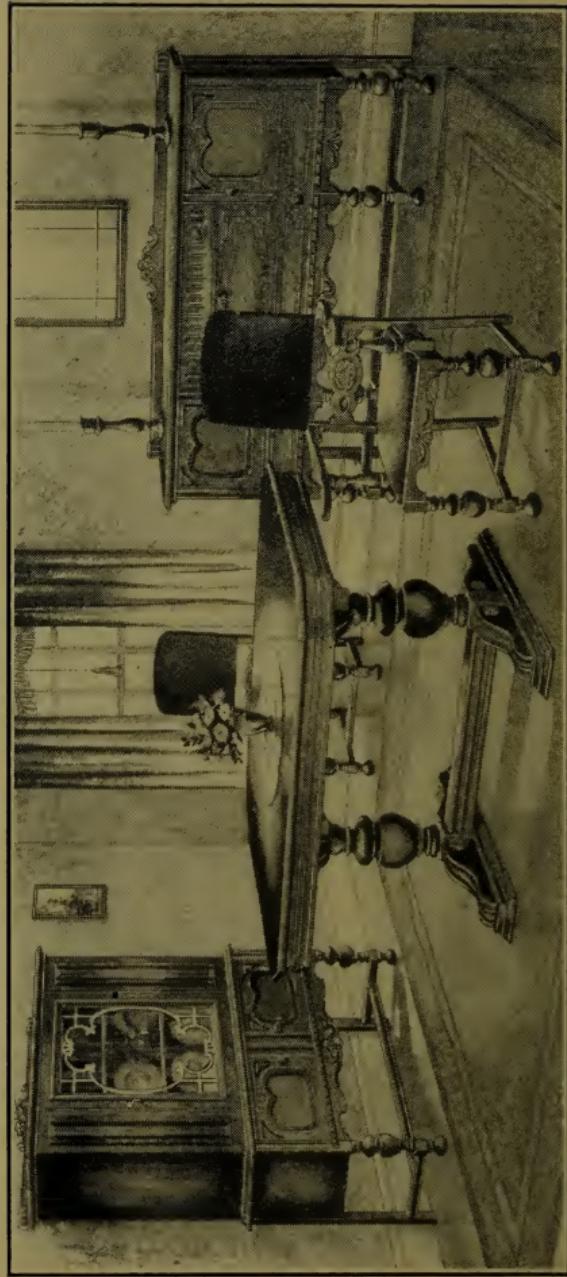
The genuine built by Gibbard

“Yes, occasionally. We try in our advertising to impress upon people to look for our name on the furniture if they want to be sure of getting genuine Gibbard Solid Walnut”.

“Is there much imitation walnut on the market?” I inquired.

“Some”, said Mr. Moffat. “Also some suites that are called ‘walnut’, but which are not Solid Walnut. In fact some actually contain very little walnut. We give a Solid Walnut Guarantee Tag with ours. See, here’s one attached to this buffet”.

“That Guarantee takes the risk out of buying furniture. If a person really wants the genuine Solid article, all that he has to do is to make sure it is built by Gibbard”, remarked Tom.



A dining room suite in Gibbard Solid Walnut. The designer went back to "Jacobean" days for his inspiration for this suite. It has an antique "high light" finish.

“I know it’s genuine Walnut”

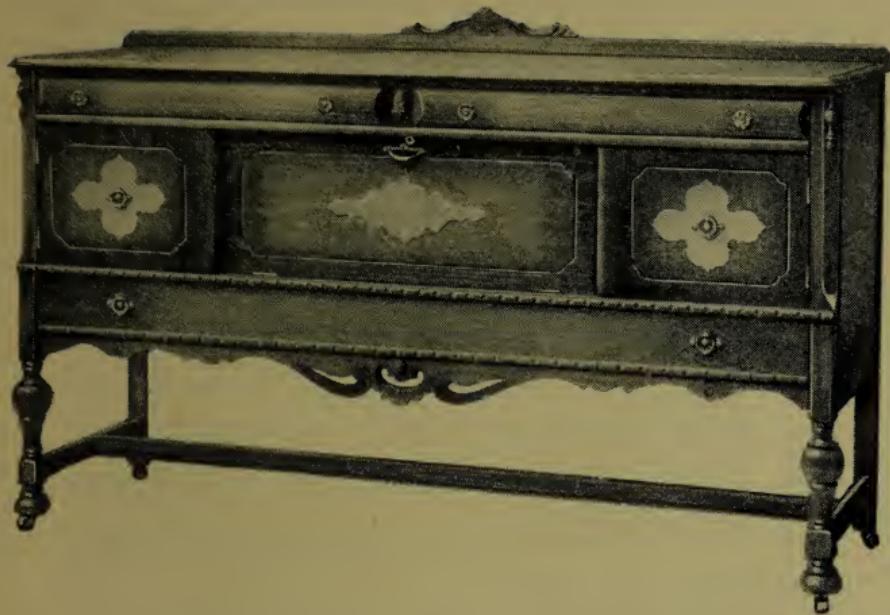
“Well, now that you have been through the factory and seen how our furniture is made, what do you think of it all?” inquired Mr. Moffat.

“I’m glad we came in and appreciate your spending so much time taking us through your plant”, responded Tom. “I know your furniture is real genuine SOLID Walnut because I’ve seen it made from first to last. I’ve seen you cut the table tops, dresser sides, bed posts, chair backs and other parts right out of the SOLID Walnut. I’ve seen how careful you are to have every part accurately made and the wonderful pains you take in finishing it. I’m sold on Gibbard SOLID Walnut. Are we near the showrooms where we can see the suites all set up?”

I couldn’t help smiling. Here was the man who didn’t want to go on a “buying expedition” asking for the showrooms.



Solid Walnut

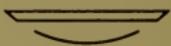


Another Gibbard Suite in Solid Walnut

Articles of real quality

And soon we were in them and admiring the different bedroom and dining room suites, the gateleg tables, butterfly tables, end tables, tea wagons, spinet desks, sewing cabinets, smoking cabinets and various other pieces. All of beautiful SOLID Walnut. All looking like articles of real quality, which we knew they were because had we not seen them, or similar pieces made in the Gibbard plant?

Did we buy any? Well, that's a secret. Tom said, "We are ruined", but seems happy about it and is eagerly waiting for our local dealer—(Gibbards do not sell direct to the consumer) to deliver the furniture that is being shipped to him for us.



Why is Walnut Supreme?

FOR centuries walnut has stood supreme among cabinet woods.

Furniture craftsmen love to work with walnut. Being easily manipulated, the most intricate, delicate or elaborate detail or ornamentation may be cut, turned or carved with hairline exactness.

With its fine, smooth grain and superior texture, walnut readily takes and retains a fine finish. And a well-rubbed and expertly finished piece of walnut is an object of real beauty.

Walnut—real, genuine walnut—especially the highland-grown walnut, such as is used for Gibbard Solid Walnut—possesses remarkable resistance against deterioration, and age actually gives it softer, warmer and mellower tones.

He or she who purchases genuine Gibbard Solid Walnut is making an investment that will bring years of happiness and satisfaction.



A Solid Mahogany Suite



Solid Mahogany



*Solid Walnut
Console Mirror*



Solid Walnut Umbrella Stand



Solid Walnut Console Table



Solid Walnut Smoker



Solid Walnut Butterfly Table



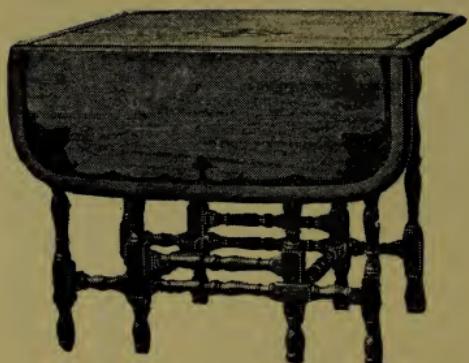
Solid Walnut Magazine Stand



Solid Walnut Desk and Chair



Solid Walnut Davenport Table



Solid Walnut Gate Leg Table



Solid Walnut Gate Leg Table



Solid Walnut Library Table



Solid Walnut Tea Wagon



Solid Walnut Tilt Top Table



Solid Walnut End Table



Solid Walnut Book Stand



Solid Walnut Fernery



Solid Walnut Magazine Rack



Solid Walnut Sewing Cabinet

